

2. NUCLEAR AND SPACE ARMS TALKS: INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR FORCES

Background

Intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) consist of non-strategic, theatre-based nuclear weapons. Both long-range (LRINF:1000-5500km) and short-range (SRINF:500-1000 km) weapons are included in the INF category. INF have long been deployed in Western Europe, as well as in other military theatres (for example, Soviet Asia). These weapon systems gained prominence in the late 1970s with the Soviet deployment of SS-20 ballistic missiles and the resulting NATO decision in December 1979 to modernize its LRINF forces in Western Europe.

In what is known as the "two-track" decision, NATO began a parallel process of pursuing arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union for LRINF while proceeding toward deployment of new weapons systems in 1983. The weapons involved included 108 Pershing II ballistic missiles and 464 ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs), stationed in five NATO nations: the United Kingdom (160 GLCMs), Italy (112 GLCMs), Belgium (48 GLCMs), the Netherlands (48 GLCMs), and West Germany (96 GLCMs and 108 Pershing IIs).

Preliminary meetings between the US and the USSR on INF began in October 1980. On 18 November 1981, President Reagan announced the "zero option" as the United States' opening position, calling on the USSR to dismantle all of its INF globally in return for the US cancelling its planned LRINF deployment. The Soviets did not accept the "zero option" and negotiations continued without result until the arrival of the first GLCMs in the United Kingdom on 15 November 1983, after which the Soviets